

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 7, line 10 with the following amended paragraph:

There are many natural plasmids contained in *Lactobacillus* strains, in which the replication origins and genes encoding necessary proteins are suitable for the vector construction of the present invention. It is known that there are three different kinds of natural plasmids contained in *Lactobacillus plantarum* (ATCC 8014, CCRC 10357) with 2.1, 10.5, and 38.8 kb in size, respectively (Yan T-R, et al., 1996, *Chinese Agri. Chem. Soc.*, **34**:723-731). Due to the requirements of convenience and stabilization, the smallest one of the three plasmids is selected for the vector of the present invention. The plasmid of 2.1 kb in size contains a plus origin of replication, an open reading frame, and a replication control region with a sequence group of 17 nucleotides repeated 13 times; wherein the open reading frame (SEQ ID NO: 7) translates a protein (Rep A protein) of 317 amino acids (SEQ ID NO: 8) in length, which possesses the function associated with plasmid replication (Bouia A., et al., 1989, *Plasmid*, **22**:185-192; Bringel F., et al., 1989, *Plasmid*, **22**:193-202). The present invention chooses a suitable restriction enzyme such as *BclI* to linearize the plasmid under the condition that two important elements described above are not destroyed, so as to facilitate the linear plasmid's incorporation into the vector of the present invention.